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HEADQUARTERS
13TH AVIATION BATTALION
(DELTA BATTALION)
APO San Francisco 96215

AVAW-CC

12 May 1966

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned Period Ending 30 April 1966
(RCS CSG PO-28 (R1))

STATEMENT #2 UNCLASSIFIED

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REGULATIONS
D

1. In accordance with the provisions of AR 525-24, the following report is submitted:

SECTION I

SIGNIFICANT ORGANIZATION OR UNIT ACTIVITIES

a. ORGANIZATION: During the reporting period the 13th Aviation Battalion included:

- (1) Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment with attached 53d Quartermaster Detachment and 13th Security Detachment.
- (2) Company A, 101st Aviation Battalion (AML) with attached 167th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 41st Medical Detachment, 277th Signal Detachment (Avionics) and 78th Artillery Detachment (Radar).
- (3) 114th Aviation Company (AML) with attached 544th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 96th Signal Detachment (Avionics) 83d Medical Detachment and 62d Quartermaster Detachment (POL).
- (4) 121st Aviation Company (AML) with attached 80th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance), 257th Signal Detachment (Avionics) 5th Quartermaster Detachment (POL) and 69th Infantry Detachment (Radar).
- (5) Company A, 502d Aviation Battalion (AML) with attached 150th Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance) and 28th Signal Detachment.
- (6) 221st Aviation Company (SAL).

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b. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES: During the reporting period the 325th Signal Detachment (Avionics) was released from attachment to the 221st Aviation Company and assigned to 34th General Support Group (AM&S). In April 1966 the 13th Aviation Battalion lost to DEROS, 52 officers and warrant officers and 164 enlisted men. This loss is equal to the assets of one airmobile company and was caused by the first anniversary date of the departure from CONUS of Co A, 101st Aviation Company. An infusion program for exchanging officers and warrant officers with the 1st Cavalry Division resulted in a transfer of nine officers and warrant officers to the 1st Cav and receipt from the 1st Cav of 39 officers and warrant officers. This in effect reduced the April DEROS hump and transfers it to August, which puts the 13th Aviation Battalion in competition with 1st Cav for aviation personnel arriving in country in the month of August. It also builds the August and September projected aviator losses to 107 or 45% of authorized helicopter aviator strength.

c. OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE AVIATION SUPPORT.

The Delta Aviation Battalion and assigned units continued to provide operational and administrative support to the ARVN IV Corps, its subordinate units, and other agencies operating in the IV Corps tactical zone. Operational and administrative support missions include, command liaison, outpost resupply, medical evacuation, airlifted resupply, radio relay and defoliation escort and survey. Statistics generated in support of these missions are as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Hours Flown:	10,178	9,873	10,939	10,832	41,822
Sorties:	20,435	15,384	18,901	16,689	71,409
Passengers Moved:	31,960	42,891	33,826	30,107	138,784
Cargo Tons Moved:	259	497	427	318	1,501

Figures include performance data of 134th Aviation Company (AM FU) under operational control of 13th Aviation Battalion.

d. TACTICAL AVIATION SUPPORT: Tactical support was rendered to the ARVN IV Corps, its subordinate units, and special forces units operating in the IV Corps tactical zone. Such support during this period included air-lifted assault missions, eagle flights, reconnaissance, surveillance, leaflet dissemination, armed escort, aeromedical evacuation, night armed surveillance, canal curfew enforcement (Lightning Bug) and riot control agent dispensing.

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Statistics generated in support of these missions are as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Heliborne Assault Missions	24	23	22	34	103
Hours Flown	5,390	5,193	4,202	4,982	19,767
Sorties	7,110	6,274	12,250	8,353	33,987
Troops Moved	17,892	16,784	16,531	17,201	68,408

Dan Chi 199 28-30 Jan 1966.

Operation Dan Chi 199 was initiated at 0600 hours with a lift of two ARVN battalions (842 troops) 28 January 1966 into an area 12 miles southwest of Vi Thanh. 43 helicopters of the 13th Aviation Battalion supported the 21st Division search and destroy operation in the area where the VC D-2 Regiment had been reported operating. No significant contact was made the first day of the three day operation, however one armed UH1B was hit and one pilot received a foot wound. During the search phase, significant stores of arms and ammunition were found. Three ARVN soldiers held prisoner by the VC since October were recovered. The second day of the operation was a continuation of the search. During the night, a VC battalion mounted an attack against the 33rd Regiment, which was repelled with the assistance of armed helicopters and resulted in heavy losses. 21st Division troops were extracted from the area on 30 January. A total of 830 troops were extracted. Results were greater than any previous 21st Division operation. 108 VC KIA (68 KIA claimed by armed helicopter) and 11 VC captured.

Following equipment captured:

- 28 machine guns
- 74 rifles
- 4 60mm mortars
- 30 cases of grenades
- 20 tons of small arms ammo, mines and assorted equipment
- 1500 lbs of medical supplies
- 1600 lb caches of rice (destroyed in place)

Friendly losses were:

- 12 ARVN KIA
- 44 ARVN WIA

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Support of Special Forces Outpost 15 Alpha (Forward Operating Base) 10-11 April 1966.

At 2307 hours, 9 April 1966, Special Forces Outpost 15 Alpha (FOB) XS 200825 came under attack by the 261st and 267th Main Force Battalions. Special Forces Detachment B-41 at Moc Hoa, requested air support through 7th Division Headquarters. At 2342 hours an AC47 "Spooky" aircraft was over the outpost dropping flares and took the attacking force under fire. At 0035 hours, 10 April, the first flight of fighters had arrived and put in several strikes around the outpost. By this time, a number of Viet Cong had succeeded in penetrating the walls of the outpost itself. B-41 Detachment called for additional air support and 7th Division recommended an armed platoon be sent to support the outpost. At 0230 hours, the "Cobra" Armed Platoon of the 114th Aviation Company was scrambled. The "Cobras" departed Vinh Long with two heavy fire teams, a total of six aircraft. At 0310, one fire team arrived at 15 Alpha and immediately engaged the attacking VC. The other fire team proceeded to Moc Hoa to refuel and pick up ammunition and radios being flown in by a CV-2 aircraft for outpost resupply. At 0340 hours, the "resupply" fire team departed Moc Hoa for 15 Alpha. While the first fire team suppressed enemy fires, the other attempted to land and drop off the load of supplies. Heavy automatic weapons fire was received less than 100 meters from the outpost. After two attempts, the fire team under blackout conditions, managed to land inside the outpost and delivered the badly needed supplies. The two fire teams then joined forces and disrupted the VC attack. The VC commenced a withdrawal to the northwest, leaving their dead and wounded behind. Because of darkness, the helicopters lost contact with the VC. While one fire team continued to search for the VC, the other fire team began evacuating wounded from the outpost to Moc Hoa. At approximately 0645 hours, one of the armed aircraft spotted three sampans and five VC, 1500 meters northwest of the outpost and took them under fire. In this same area, the fire team discovered numerous, freshly dug foxholes occupied by from two to three men each. The armed platoon immediately took these positions under fire. No fire was returned by the occupants of these foxholes even though the helicopters were hovering directly above them. From 0730 until 1120 hours, the "Cobras" kept five of the six armed aircraft over the area, sending a single aircraft back to Moc Hoa at a time to rearm and refuel. During this period, a column of VC troops 150 meters long, in uniform, were observed walking down a trail in single file toward the VC positions. An armed aircraft took this column under fire and dispersed them after several firing passes. At 1115 hours, two armed platoons and ten UH1D aircraft arrived at Moc Hoa after being released from a 9th Division operation. The two armed platoons relieved the "Cobras" and continued to attack the VC positions.

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At 1145 hours, the ten UH1D aircraft, escorted by the armed platoons, lifted two companies of ARVN and CIDG troops into two landing zones just west of the VC positions. One "Cobra" aircraft was shot down on the first lift, its crew and equipment being evacuated immediately. A CH47 later evacuated the downed aircraft. On the second lift, a "Viking" aircraft received 19 hits. Its crew chief was wounded. Such heavy fire was received from the objective area that the ARVN and CIDG companies could not mount an attack. The armed platoons continued to strike the area the remainder of the day. Air strikes called in to the north of the objective caused secondary explosions. At 1800 hours the ARVN and CIDG companies were extracted. All aircraft were released upon completion of the extraction. At 1005 hours, 11 April, intelligence reports received at 7th Division indicated that a number of VC had returned to the area to carry off the dead they were forced to leave behind the previous day. At 1025 hours, one C4C aircraft from Soc Trang, an armed platoon and ten UH1D aircraft from a 9th Division operation, were sent to Moc Hoa for a quick re-action lift. 275 ARVN and CIDG troops were again lifted into the operational area. No contact was made with the VC. However, 23 additional VC bodies were discovered. At 1830 hours, the ARVN and CIDG troops were extracted and all aircraft were released.

Final results of the operation:

a. Enemy:

191 VC KIA (140 of these killed by armed helicopter).
19 sampans sunk (all by armed helicopters)
100 (est) VC WIA

b. Friendly:

1 US KIA
2 US WIA
22 ARVN and CIDG KIA
18 ARVN and CIDG WIA
14 ARVN and CIDG MIA
1 armed helicopter shot down due to ground fire (later recovered).
9 other helicopters received hits
3 troop carriers
6 armed helicopters

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Dan Chi 219C 23-24 April 1966.

Dan Chi 219C, the fifth day of a 21st Infantry Division five day operation, was supported by 35 lift helicopters plus three armed platoons of the 13th Aviation Battalion. One battalion was helilifted into the operational area. Three other battalions were landed by river assault boats in an attempt to squeeze an estimated reinforced battalion against a river. Armed ships supported throughout the day and provided particularly effective fire support. When the VC had been compressed sufficiently that the ground troops could no longer advance, a locally fabricated CS grenade dispenser on a UH1D was employed at treetop level in four target passes. This is the only recent use of gas in the Delta, but had limited success because the 21st Divisions troops were slow to follow up the gas attack, although the VC fire was silent for at least a half hour. Essential resupply was completed after dark, evacuation of casualties was hindered by heavy VC sniper fire in the vicinity of pick-up sites. That night, "Lightning Bug" was flown by armed platoons which had fought all day to reduce enemy exfiltration of the area. A heavy concentration of tactical air was applied throughout the night which undoubtedly complicated the VC evacuation of the area.

A search of the area on 23 and 24 April revealed 42 dead VC. Six were captured and an estimated 230 were killed, of which 150 were credited by ARVN to armed helicopters. Subsequent intelligence has indicated that the kill is an estimated two battalions and a regimental headquarters and may reach 400. ARVN losses were 28 KIA, 134 WIA. All wounded were evacuated by helicopter and CV-2. 12 weapons and two radio's were captured. Seven aircraft were hit by enemy fire and six crew members were wounded, none seriously.

c. TACTICS.

During this reporting period, the 13th Aviation Battalion has been part of an aggressive campaign on the part of IV Corps to seek out the VC and keep him off balance. Operations have been conducted on a scale not approached before. Four hundred man lifts supported by four armed platoons operate over three and four day periods in areas once considered untenable by ARVN. The confidence ARVN has gained extends into use of supporting weapons. It is now commonplace for lifts to be conducted in close proximity to controlled 20mm strafing runs by USAF. Armed ship support tactics have developed to the point that the ground commanders have gained confidence in using the armed helicopter as his closest supporting weapon. On all ground assaults, an armed platoon provides close-in supporting fires allowing the infantry to maneuver.

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(ICS CSG PO-28 (A1))

Engaged troops depend on helicopter fires and request them normally.

During the reporting period, two new weapons systems have been employed by the Delta Battalion. In early April, the ARVN divisions began to show an interest in the use of CS Riot Control Agent in an effort to dislodge VC out of dug in positions. Delta Battalion responded by providing two types of dispensing equipment; an issued system which utilizes the XM3 rocket launcher adapted for CS grenade delivery. The delivery system proved to be very effective once the proper timing sequence was found. In test, excellent coverage 100 X 400 meters was achieved, but this system reduces the armed ship strength available for operations. The second delivery means is a locally manufactured system utilizing 2.75 rocket shipping tubes vertically mounted on UH1D with a spring loaded trap door release system.

To date only the home made device has been used against the VC. Coverage was good but ground troops did not exploit the gas by attacking and lost the advantage of CS agent effects. Delta Battalion continues to expand and improve on its gas dispensing capability in an attempt to avoid tying up armed or troop carrier aircraft permanently.

Late in April, 13th Aviation Battalion received one of two XM31 20mm gun systems in country, for a 30 day test. Already the system has been tested in combat with excellent results. No functional difficulties have been encountered. The range of the 20mm weapon gives the armed helicopter a weapon with sufficient reach to engage the increasing number of Cal .50 machine guns used by the VC against helicopters.

f. SURVEILLANCE: During March and April, a test was conducted of Air Force operational control of Army OI's. The test was to determine if consolidation would lead to better utilization thus reducing stated requirements for more aircraft. The test was conducted in the IV Corps tactical zone combining the assets of the 221st Aviation Company (SAL) and the 22d Tactical Air Support Squadron. CO 221st Aviation Company was appointed deputy test director under a test director appointed by 7th Air Force. At the conclusion of the test, results were briefed to COMUSMACV with the following findings and resulting action:

(1) Consolidation under USAF control did not improve utilization. Utilization actually fell off. Ground advisers felt that responsiveness also was decreased during the test period as a result of USAF imposed priorities and reaction to requirements.

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(2) General Westmoreland directed that each service would maintain control over its own OI aircraft and that cross-training of FAC and Army OI aviators would be accomplished to allow cross-servicing of aircraft and missions. Army OI pilots now may identify and mark targets for fighter strikes where a USAF FAC is not available. Army pilots are being schooled in this by USAF.

g. VC ACTIVITY: VC activity in IV Corps has been characterized by a trend back to Phase II of insurgency. In only three cases have the VC come out in battalion strength and on two of those occasions, he was engaged and defeated by combined ARVN, and armed helicopter action. For the first time VC units were seen to break and run, with loss of control by leaders. There has been a reduction in VC initiated attacks and ambushes with an increase in lower phase insurgency activity (Harassment, road sabotage and mining, kidnapping, assassination, propaganda incidents and demonstrations). Acts of terrorism have replaced large unit operations.

h. TRAINING: During the reporting period, all helicopter crews were trained in the techniques of flight with the protective mask in order to exploit with immediate airlanded forces, friendly use of riot control agents.

In April, fourteen crews of the 25th Division Aviation Battalion were placed TDY with the 13th Aviation Battalion for training in combat operations. Four troop carrier and 10 armed crews were integrated into the daily operations of 13th Battalion units and completed their operational training on a five day combat operation.

In response to COMUSMACV requirements, IV Corps and 13th Aviation Battalion, jointly, have constituted an Immediate Reaction Force (IRF) capable of rapid reaction to VC activity, at night, anywhere in the IV Corps tactical zone. This is in addition to normal daytime reaction provided by recall of airlift. The aviation portion of the IRF has been tested for reaction capability and found to be capable of providing troop carrier and armed helicopter support of ground forces well within the planned reaction time of 15 minutes.

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(RCS CSG PO-28 (R1))

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SECTION II

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

a. PERSONNEL: Recommend:

(1) That the aviator infusion program be discontinued. Individual replacements received with ninety days to DEROS only assist the unit as a stop gap measure. Processing and standardization result in approximately seven days non-productive time which will be duplicated in ninety days by these individual's replacements. It would seem a more efficient use of man power to replace DEROS personnel with newly arrived in-country personnel.

(2) That immediate action be taken to organize and deploy installation operating detachments, staffed by non-aviation rated officers. The 13th Aviation Battalion operates three major installations, all of which require a full time Installation Coordinator plus an additional three officers per installation in a part time basis. All of these officers come out of the airmobile company aviator strength and decrease the cockpit population of those airmobile companies. The operation of an installation supporting upwards of 1000 officers and enlisted men is not a part time duty, nor can the units afford to decrease even part time, the already short aviator strength.

b. LOGISTICS: Recommend:

(1) That the IV Corps area be given a higher priority on movement of supplies by South East Asia Airlift (8th Aerial Port). The average back log of tonnage in Vung Tau for the Delta over the past 90 days is 50 tons. 13th Aviation Battalion has found it necessary to establish a liaison office at Vung Tau to coordinate and expedite movement of supplies to the Delta. During the months of March and April, 95 tons of supplies were moved by organic Army aircraft into the IV Corps area.

(2) That bulk JP4 fuel storage facilities in the IV Corps tactical zone be expanded to include Vi Thanh Airfield located in Chung Thien Sector. Forty percent of the major airmobile operations in the Delta are staged from Vi Thanh. This airfield is capable of landing the C-130 aircraft and if bulk fuel storage and transfer equipment is provided, will be capable of receiving fuel direct from the C-130 as has been done at Soc Trang.

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(MCS CSG PO-28 (M1))

c. ORGANIZATION AND TRAINING: Recommend that a company size security unit be assigned to 13th Aviation Battalion. This company should have it's own command and control structure and only be dependent on the aviation battalion for administration of personnel records as are the airmobile companies. The present security detachment does not have the necessary personnel to adequately provide twenty four hour protection of critical areas at three airfields, nor does it provide the necessary officer and non-commissioned officer personnel to train and supervise these personnel. A MTOE has been submitted by 12th Aviation Group to standardize its assigned aviation battalions but does not include the security detachment.

d. LESSONS LEARNED:

(1) Affect of dust on UH-1 helicopter engines.

(a) Discussion: During this past quarter, an airmobile company of the 13th Aviation Battalion had an unfortunate experience at a particularly sandy stagefield during an operation. At the conclusion of the operation, seven UH-1D helicopters required engine changes due to the amount of sand taken in. There are positive steps that can be taken to prevent recurrence of similar incidents.

1. Whenever possible, wet down sandy areas with water trucks.

2. Space aircraft on approach so as to allow dust to settle before next aircraft lands.

3. Minimize hovering in dusty areas.

4. Make approaches to ground.

5. Use engine intake filters if available.

(b) Observation: Although this condition exists primarily during the dry season, the preventive measures suggested above can be equally applied to operations in loose gravel, straw and other foreign objects.

(2) Night Airfield Security (flare) Missions.

(a) Discussion: Mortar attacks on installations of the 13th Aviation Battalion, proved the advisability of randomly selecting time schedules and flight routes for flare dropping aircraft.

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(LCS CSG PO-28 (1.1))

The establishment of a set time pattern or routine on flare missions provides the VC with an opportunity of selecting a time when an installation is most vulnerable to attack. Some recommendations are:

1. Coordinate times between units flying the flare missions to insure no excessive gaps or overlaps in time.

2. Vary time schedule between 2100 hours and 0300 hours.

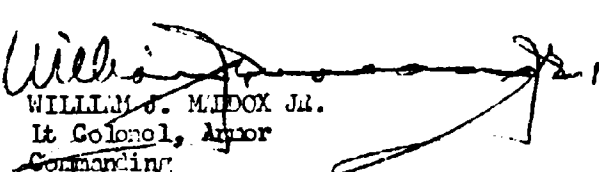
3. Avoid flying a fixed pattern over installation, i.e., circles, figure "8"s etc., vary flight.

4. Concentrate majority of observation on likely avenues of approach of VC and likely mortar positions.

(b) Observation: All aviation units located at installations where they are required to provide all or a portion of their airfield defensive security measures, should be advised of these suggestions learned through experience.

(3) Army aviation loses its responsiveness when forced to operate under fixed priorities.

(a) Discussion: During a recent OI test, conducted by the US Army and US Air Force, fixed mission priorities were established and in most cases rigidly adhered to. Situations arose where aircraft could not be released to perform a mission deemed essential by ground elements until a higher priority mission was completed. Any priority system established must be flexible and capable of meeting requirements of the rapidly changing tactical situations characteristic of counterinsurgency operations.


WILLIAM J. MEDOX JR.
Lt Colonel, Armor
Commanding

MACV-IVC-3 (12 May 1966)

1st Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned Period Ending 30 April 1966
(RCS CSG PO-28 (R1))

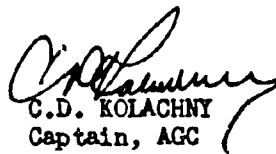
Headquarters, Senior Advisor IV Corps, APO San Francisco 96215

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the Army,
Washington, D. C. 20310

1. Forwarded.

2. The 13th Aviation Battalion has continued to be the single most influencing factor in carrying the war to the Viet Cong in the IV Corps area. The helicopter troop transportation capability has added depth to combat and has allowed ARVN commanders to operate in areas formerly prohibited by lack of mobility. The organic armed platoons have added a tremendous fire power in support of ARVN operations as well as an additional security element in troop movement, resupply and medical evacuation. The light aircraft company has given the IV Corps a meaningful surveillance program and has materially assisted in the interdiction campaign against the enemy. The CV-2 "Caribou" company has provided the IV Corps with a vital logistical system and provided for flexibility in operational troop lift.

FOR THE SENIOR ADVISOR:


C.D. KOLACHNY
Captain, AGC
Admin Officer

MACV-IVC-3 (12 May 1966)

1st Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned Period Ending 30 April 1966
(RCS CSG PO-28 (R1))

Headquarters, Senior Advisor IV Corps, APO San Francisco 96215

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the Army,
Washington, D. C. 20310

1. Forwarded.

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FOR THE SENIOR ADVISOR:

C.D. KOLACHNY
Captain, AGC
Admin Officer

AVC-DH (12 May 66)

5th Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned Period Ending 30 April 1966
(RCS CSGPO-28 (RL))

HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY, VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96307 **12 JUL 1966**

THRU: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-MH,
APO 96558

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the
Army, Washington, D.C. 20310

1. This headquarters concurs with the 13th Aviation Battalion's Operational Report on Lessons Learned as indorsed.

2. Reference Section II, paragraph b:

a. MACV Directive 55-4 prescribes the priority system within RVN. No provisions have been made to establish priorities for a given area. Priorities are determined by unit and type of cargo. Effect on immediate combat operations is the basic consideration. Establishment of priorities by geographical areas could result in low priority cargo being shipped before high priority cargo.

b. The Vi Thanh Airfield is one of sixteen locations under study in the Delta at this time. Message this headquarters, AVD-PO requested information from the IV Corps Senior Advisor about the airfield. A meeting is scheduled at this headquarters on 11 July to consider prestock points.

c. Tentative plans call for the 1st Logistical Command to take over major POL points in the Delta as equipment and personnel become available. Vi Thanh is one of these points. The 1st Logistical Command is expected to assume responsibility for these points during the fall of 1966. Bulk collapsible tankage is in short supply and is presently used to meet higher priorities.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

WR Antrey
fw
JAMES R. PERRY ¹/₂ LT AGC
Major AGC

GPOP-MH (12 May 66)

6th Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report on Lessons Learned Period Ending 30 April 1966
(RCS CSGPO-28 (R1))

HQ, U.S. ARMY, PACIFIC, APO San Francisco 96558 20 AUG 1966

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the Army,
Washington D.C. 20310

1. The Operational Report on Lessons Learned of the 13th Aviation Battalion for the period 1 January - 30 April 1966 is forwarded herewith.

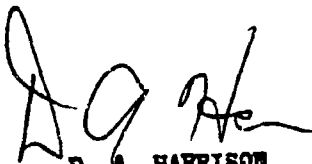
2. In general, this headquarters concurs with the basic ORLL as modified by the previous indorsements. The following additional comments are supplied:

a. Section II, paragraphs a(2) and c. At DA direction, USARV is presently engaged in a study to determine minimum base camp support standards. These standards will be employed to structure base camp support units that will alleviate the administrative and logistical problems of tactical units.

b. Section II, paragraph b(2) and paragraph 2, 1st Aviation Brigade 3d Indorsement. Twenty-six mini-port systems were shipped to the RVN with an ETA of early August. One of these systems could alleviate the fuel handling problems of the 13th Aviation Battalion.

c. Section II, paragraphs d(1)(a) and (b). The dust problem has been referred to DA for developmental effort, and various items are currently being introduced into the RVN on an experimental, test basis. These include dust inhibitors, soil stabilizers, and flexible ground covers. The Bell Helicopter Company, for example, has submitted experimental filters for military test and evaluation, and these should be available in the near future. It is recognized that the preventive measures outlined in the cited paragraphs are inadequate, but they constitute the only known solutions at this time.

FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF:



D. A. HARRISON
Capt, AGC
Asst AG

Copy furn:
CG USARV, Attn: AVC-DH